

THE MACON BEACON

67th YEAR

MACON, MISSISSIPPI, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 31, 1915.

NUMBER 11

Silly Criminal Laws.

Perhaps no phenomenon of modern life is more marked than the prevalent mania for penal regulation of the petty details of conduct. There seems to be no human action that somebody does not want to prohibit. With the intemperate exponents of temperance we have become familiar; the cohorts of Cotton Mather have reincarnated in Sunday observance leagues. But around these central figures of sumptuary legislation circles a host of minor middlemen. Prohibitions under penalty of fine and imprisonment of the use in hotels of bed sheets less than a statutory length, and of the use of cracked china in like institutions are but samples of the absurdities that have already found their way on the statute books. And the craze grows apace. Among the bills reported as introduced in various assemblies are those prohibiting the exhibition by any merchant of a clock which is too fast or too slow, and of the use of face lotions by any woman under 40 years of age. A recent bill makes it a penitentiary offense for a man to put his feet on his desk while dictating to a woman stenographer. And it is rather more than a joke. Thoughtful people complain of the growing disrespect of law. Who could avoid disrespect for such laws, and how few can or will discriminate between wise laws and foolish when both are of equal authority? And the mischief does not stop there. With the multiplication of trivial crimes involving no moral turpitude arrests inevitably increase. It is said by an investigator of repute that of the 125,000 people arrested in Chicago in 1914, over half were charged with committing crimes which were unknown in 1894. Now every unnecessary arrest is an unmixed evil. Every time that a reputable man or boy is arrested, haled through the streets and thrust into a police station cell, his self-respect suffers an injury that makes a worse citizen. Will the refined woman who is treated as a common criminal, as in one state she may be, because her hatpin projects more than half an inch beyond the crown of her hat, even recover from the shame of it? It is about time the robust common sense of the American people put a summary stop to this "verboten" nonsense. —Law Notes.

Cotton in 1916.

A story in last Sunday's Post-Dispatch, dated New Orleans, is indicative of the recklessness of the statements some indulge in when writing for publication in a newspaper whose editors are not familiar with the question under discussion.

A New Orleans cotton expert says the acreage in 1916 will be increased 30 per cent over what it was in 1915. No one can tell at this moment whether the acreage will be increased 3 per cent, 30 per cent, or whether it will remain stationary.

Many conditions that will control the acreage in 1916 have not yet come into being. Even if it is in the mind of the growers to plant a large acreage in 1916 there may be obstacles in the way such as too much rain or drought at planting time which will thwart the intention.

In 1914 the cotton acreage was a record in bigness. The total acreage was 36,960,000 acres. The acreage, it is estimated, was reduced to 30,000,000 acres, and an increase of 30 per cent over 1915 would give an acreage of about 40,000,000 acres. With these facts in mind, the statement of a 30 per cent increase over 1915 is absurd.

There probably will be an increase over 1915. There are certain allurements in price that will draw some people into more cotton than they planted in 1915, but we do not believe that with no extraordinarily favorable condition for a big acreage that the acreage would reach what it was in 1914.

The government reports now indicate an increase in the wheat acreage over all the cotton states where wheat is grown except in Texas and Oklahoma.

The farmers throughout the South, in so far as reports show, are practically unanimous in say-

ing that they will try to raise enough foodstuffs for their own use. Some of the large Delta planters, having lands of extraordinary fertility, may materially increase their cotton acreage. Some of these may abandon all other crops, but we doubt that this number will be large. We are sure that in the St. Francis basin the work of diversification is going to continue.

It might be a fatal mistake if the South went back solely to cotton. Nothing is surprising these days. Suppose for an instant that England should lose command of the seas, and the United States should herself become involved in war. No cotton would be exported.

Suppose that even though England holds command of the seas, she will need all of her own ships for transportation of her troops. Then we cannot get any cotton out of the country.

Suppose that the German submarines continue to cut down the number of mercantile ships, then ship room is reduced.

Suppose our congressmen remain foolish and refuse to pass the Wilson shipping bill.

All of these contingencies make trusting to one crop precarious.

If our people plant the acreage in cotton that they did in 1914, and then each one tries to raise enough on his place to feed himself and his live stock, the problem will be much simpler.

The thing that made for a high price in cotton this year was that in the fall the farmers found themselves supplied with an abundance of food, grown on their own places, for man and beast, and they were free in marketing their cotton. They did not dump the cotton on the market in October. In that month the buyers had to go to the farmers. The farmer was able to make the buyer come to him, because he did not have to go to town to buy rations and did not have to take his cotton to town to get the wherewithal to buy the rations.

There may be an increase in the cotton acreage, but no man is justified in saying that the increase will be 30 per cent. He might as well say it will be 40 per cent. He might be just as near the truth when he says it would be 10 per cent.

King Cotton is his rule in 1916 is still on the knees of the gods. —Commercial Appeal.

Citizens by Choice.

In an editorial on "Citizens by Choice," the St. Paul Pioneer Press calls attention to the fact that naturalized citizens of the United States are Americans by choice and not by accident of birth, and in that connection it quotes from the novel, "The Fall of a Nation," in which John Vassar, member of Congress and a naturalized Pole, is made to say: "The man or woman born in free America inherits it all as a matter of course. He rarely thinks of his priceless birthright. To my old father every day of his life is a Fourth of July! To me it is the same. A frail, half starved little orphan clinging to his hand thirty-one years ago, I stood on the deck of a steamer and saw this wonderful Promised Land. You are an American by accident of birth. You had no choice. We are Americans because we willed to come. We love this land because its worth loving. We know why we love it. We lifted up our eyes from a far country—amid tears and ashes and ruins—and saw the light of Liberty shining here across the seas. We came and you received us with open arms. You set no hired spies to watch us. You made our homes and our firesides holy ground. We kiss the soil beneath our feet. It is our country—our flag, our nation, our people, as it can't be yours who do not realize its full meaning."

One of the most pathetic sights in the world is a highbrow person trying to conceal his delight in the swab comedy of a movie show. —Calgary Eye Opener.

"A wise old owl lived in an oak, The more he heard the less he spoke: The less he spoke the more he heard. Why aren't women more like that bird?"

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